United Nations

Press Release

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MONDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- Security Council appeals for assistance to 21 countries affected by sanctions against Iraq.

- Security Council authorizes establishment of United Nations Mission for Referendum in Western Sahara.

- Secretary-General to consult with Permanent Representatives of France, United Kingdom, United States, Iraq on proposal to establish United Nations police force to protect Iraqi refugees and international relief workers.

- Secretary-General welcomes agreement signed in Mexico City by Government of El Salvador and Frente Farabundo Marti para la Liberacion Nacional.

- Resumed session of General Assembly takes up financing of Iraq-Kuwait Observation Mission, among other items. President appeals to international community for aid to victims of recent earthquakes.

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The Security Council this afternoon issued a "solemn appeal" for assistance to 21 countries confronted with special economic problems arising from their compliance with sanctions imposed against Iraq by the Council in its resolution 661 (1990).

It took that action through a statement read out by Council President Paul Noterdaeme (Belgium), who appealed to States, international financial institutions and United Nations bodies. The Council also invited those which had not yet done so to inform the Secretary-General of measures they had taken on behalf of States which had invoked Article 50 of the United Nations Charter. That Article declares that any country finding itself confronted with special economic problems arising from preventive or enforcement measures taken by the Council shall have the right to consult the Council regarding a solution of those problems.

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For information media—not an official record

The 21 States seeking the Council's support on this matter are: Bangladesh, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Djibouti, India, Jordan, Lebanon, Poland, Romania, Seychelles, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, Mauritania, Pakistan, Philippines, Uruguay, Viet Nam, Yemen and Yugoslavia.

In a separate meeting today, the Council unanimously endorsed the Secretary-General's plan to establish as soon as possible the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO). The plan is based on an agreed settlement of the question under the auspices of the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity (OAU). The main elements of the settlement are a cease-fire between Morocco and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Saguia el-Hamra and Rio de Oro (POLISARIO) and a referendum by which the people of the Territory are to choose between independence and integration with Morocco.

Briefing correspondents today, the Secretary-General's Special Representative on Western Sahara, Johannes Manz, said the operation was "unique" and one of the most challenging the United Nations had ever undertaken. He said his task was to ensure that the people of Western Sahara would be enabled to exercise their right to self-determination freely, without military or administrative constraints.

Mr. Manz noted that this was the first time the United Nations had been given full responsibility for the organization and conduct of a referendum. What made the operation complex, he said, was its limited time-frame which made a specific calendar necessary. The operation was further restricted by budgetary constraints, which made it necessary to ensure that all staff assigned to the mission were of the highest calibre and integrity.

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Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar commented this afternoon on a proposal to establish a United Nations police force to protect Iraqi refugees and international relief workers. In reply to questions by correspondents, he said he considered the security of the Kurds important. He was going to discuss the matter with France, the United Kingdom and the United States -- three members of the Security Council -- as well as with the Ambassador of Iraq.

Meanwhile, the Government of Japan has informed the Secretary-General in a letter dated 25 April that it has decided to provide new emergency financial assistance for Kurds and other displaced persons, bringing total Japanese assistance to $100 million. The letter said the decision was taken in response to the requests of international organizations.

In related news, emergency food aid worth nearly $59 million will be provided by the World Food Programme (WFP) for Iraqi refugees in Iraq and Turkey, and refugees and drought victims in Africa.

The agency said that a shipment of tons of wheat, rice, canned fish and high-energy biscuits would be supplied to the 1 million Iraqi refugees in

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northern Iraq. Much of the food had already been purchased inside Turkey and was on its way to the Kurdish refugees. Half-a-million Iraqi refugees inside Turkey would also receive emergency food aid.

In addition, WFP has extended emergency food aid to drought victims in Ethiopia and to 200,000 Ethiopian returnees from Somalia as well as to Somali refugees in Kenya.

In a separate development, the spokesman for the United Nations Iraq-Kuwait Observation Mission (UNIKOM) said in a statement today that an incident had occurred at which a Kuwaiti military truck, partially loaded with ammunition, was driving backward towards the entrance of the SAS hotel, the temporary headquarters of UNIKOM, when it went up in flames.

He said a series of explosions followed, during which all civilian and military personnel were led to take coverage. The incident, which lasted for about 30 minutes, resulted in injuries to four people, none of whom was from UNIKOM. Eleven cars were destroyed, some of which were on loan to the mission, and eight were damaged, the spokesman said.

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The Secretary-General said today through his spokeswoman that he was encouraged and pleased at the agreement signed in Mexico late Saturday by the Government of El Salvador and the Frente Farabundo Marti para la Liberacion Nacional (FMLN).

He said the accord was important in itself as well as for the coming stages of negotiations, to which it could give new impetus. He especially thanked the Governments of Colombia, Mexico and Venezuela and the President of Spain, who he said had played an important role in ensuring the success of the just concluded talks.

He also welcomed the progress in talks between the Government of Guatemala and the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca (URNG) on a procedure and substantive agenda for the negotiations which will begin next month and in which his representative would participate.

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At its resumed forty-fifth session, the General Assembly this morning decided to take up the financing of the United Nations Iraq-Kuwait Observation Mission (UNIKOM) and six other issues.

Those subjects include restructuring of the United Nations in the economic and social fields; the date and venue of the eighth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD); financing United Nations peace-keeping operations; conditions of service for members of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU); budgetary implications of staff rules adopted by the Assembly last year and the question of filling a vacancy on the Staff Pension Committee.

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President Guido de Marco (Malta) addressed the loss of life and property damage resulting from recent earthquakes in Panama, Costa Rica and the Soviet Union. He appealed to the international community to show its solidarity through a quick and generous response to requests for help.

The Assembly will meet again on Thursday, 2 May to continue its consideration of the issues opened today and to take up reports of the Fifth Committee on special emergency assistance to Haiti, Costa Rica and Panama.

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